

**Bible Study**  
**Day of Pentecost, Year C**  
**May 15, 2016**

**[RCL] Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2:1-21; John 14:8-17, (25-27); Psalm 104:25-35, 37**

**Genesis 11:1-9**

In the story of Babel we hear that at one time the whole earth shared one language. As the story deepens we learn that God chooses to separate humankind giving them different languages. This story itself seems antithetical to our conception of a God who strives for unity of all people. Some may read this account as a vengeful God keeping people (who maybe thought they could reach heaven, who maybe thought they could outsmart God) in place by complicating their ability to communicate with each other. Thinking about the lesson in this way can be confusing and is probably not all that helpful given that the story of Babel is likely an etiology. The story of the tower of Babel and scattering of people can be read as a creation myth. This narrative explains the creation of human or cultural diversity on earth. It explains to us the origin of our being and helps us to think about why the world is the way it is. Given all of this, we might reframe this story in a way that is helpful for personal reflection. We certainly have had the experience of thinking we can get by on our own. At one time or another we have thought that we do not need to rely on God. Themes found in the story of Babel might teach us something about this part of our human nature.

- Where have you experienced the feeling of having been scattered?
- When have you thought you could get by without relying on or acknowledging God?

**Psalm 104:25-35, 37**

Psalm 104 does a wonderful job of describing the kind of relationship we have with God. We are the creations of a God who has created many works. Not only has God created us, God cares for us. We belong to a God who looks after us. This God is there for us from the beginning and to the very end. Even when we turn to dust, we are created anew. As one of God's beautiful creations and as our duty in our relationship with God, the psalmist reminds us that we are to offer God praise.

- How does God continue to care for and look after you?
- How do you return this favor by offering praise?

**Acts 2:1-21**

As we've heard over the past several weeks the disciples are once again keeping each other company in the days after Jesus' death. The Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples and suddenly they are speaking in many tongues. Because of this transformation the disciples are able to spread the Good News of Jesus to people of many different cultural identities. Regardless of our mother tongue, in hearing and being transformed by the message Jesus gave to us we are all one in Christ. On Pentecost we celebrate the unity of the church. We celebrate that we can hear God in our own mother tongue and know God in relation to our own identities. We celebrate that God is with us in our visions and alongside us in our dreams.

- What sort of unity are you celebrating this Pentecost?
- When have you felt the spirit move you towards transformation?
- What are your visions? Dreams?

### **John 14:8-17 (25-27)**

This passage is filled with back and forth about the relationship between Jesus and God. The conversation revolves around the idea that if we have known Jesus we have thereby known God. That if something has to do with God it also has to do with Jesus and vice versa. As is in character, the disciples question Jesus here and seek to find proof of this assurance. In response to doubt Jesus gives them a profound gift, if the disciples ask for anything Jesus will make it so. Though as he does so, he assures them that they will go on to do greater things. That they can do just as much to make the things they ask for come to fruition as Jesus can. This is all true because God abides in them. As long as we keep the commandments we can rest in the assurance that God will be in us too.

- When in your life have you known Jesus?
- When in your life have you known God?
- What is it that you are asking for?

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